

What is claimed is:

1. A method for operating an internal combustion engine including an internal combustion engine of a motor vehicle, the method comprising the steps of:

5 checking the operability of at least one component by a diagnostic function (D);

causing said diagnostic function (D) to transmit data (CB), that said diagnostic function (D) could have found a fault, to a central function (CF) in a format uniform for all diagnostic functions (D); and,

10 causing said central function (CF) to process said data (CB).

2. The method of claim 1, wherein each of said diagnostic functions (D) communicates with the central function (CF) via an interface (FID); and, the central function (CF) establishes for each diagnostic function (D), which identifies itself to said  
5 central function (CF) at said interface (FID), a region (REC) of a suitable data structure wherein data (SB, IB, CB, CVA, CVB) of the diagnostic function (D) and for the diagnostic function (D) are stored.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the following are stored in the region (REC) of the suitable data structure: an identifier (S) of the diagnostic function (D), data (CB) as to whether the diagnostic function (D) could have run and data (IB)  
5 as to whether the diagnostic function (D) is blocked or can run.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the central function (CF)

detects whether specific operating conditions of the internal combustion engine are satisfied whereat the running of the diagnostic function (D) is expected with a certain frequency of occurrence and wherein the central function (CF) determines a first numerical value (CVA) which is based on the number of possible runthroughs of the diagnostic function (D) and determines a second numerical value (CVB) which is based on the number of specific operating conditions which have actually been present.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the central function (CF) blocks an execution of the diagnostic function (D) and a change of the second numerical value (CVB) by a common functionality (INH) when a component (S2, S3) is defective, the component (S2, S3) being necessary for achieving a purposeful diagnostic result.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein a third numerical value (CVC) is determined in the central function (CF), said numerical value (CVC) being based on the number of specific operating conditions which actually were present.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein a change of the third numerical value (CVC) is blocked in the central function (CF) if it is determined that a component (S3) is defective which is necessary in order to detect whether the specific operating conditions were present.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein a fourth numerical value (CVD) is determined in the central function (CF) which is based on the

number of starts of the internal combustion engine.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the content of the regions (REC) of the suitable data structure is inquired of in the central function (CF) in a specific and relatively slow computation raster (CALC) and the corresponding numerical values (CVA, CVB) are determined and stored, with these numerical values (CVA, CVB) being specific to the particular diagnostic function (D).

10. The method of claim 1, wherein, when an external inquiry apparatus is connected, in the central function (CF), that quotient (MIN) from the particular first numerical value (CVA) and the particular second numerical value (CVB) of a plurality of diagnostic functions (D) is outputted, which has the lowest value; and, the quotient (MIN) and the data, from which it becomes apparent to which diagnostic function (D) the quotient (MIN) is allocated, are transmitted to the external inquiry apparatus.

11. A computer program comprising being programmed for carrying out a method for operating an internal combustion engine including an internal combustion engine of a motor vehicle, the program being stored on a memory medium and the method including the steps of:

checking the operability of at least one component by a diagnostic function (D);

causing said diagnostic function (D) to transmit data (CB), that said diagnostic function (D) could have found a fault, to a central function (CF) in a format uniform for all diagnostic

functions (D); and,

causing said central function (CF) to process said data (CB).

12. A memory medium for a control apparatus of an internal combustion engine, the memory medium comprising a computer program programmed for carrying out a method for operating an internal combustion engine including an internal combustion engine of a motor vehicle, the program being stored on the memory medium and the method including the steps of:

checking the operability of at least one component by a diagnostic function (D);

causing said diagnostic function (D) to transmit data (CB), that said diagnostic function (D) could have found a fault, to a central function (CF) in a format uniform for all diagnostic functions (D); and,

causing said central function (CF) to process said data (CB).